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ARTICLES:

(1) USFJ commander: F-22 deployment "benefits Japan," emphasizes advantages of Japan-U.S. alliance

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)  
July 29, 2009

Tokyo - Lt. Gen. Edward Rice, commander of U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ), held a news conference at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo on July 28. He gave the following comments on the temporary deployment of the advanced F-22 fighters at the U.S. Air Force's Kadena base: "The deployment of the top grade aircraft in Okinawa and the completion of forward deployment will serve as a factor of stability in the region as a whole. Japan will be able to benefit from U.S. deterrence with the deployment of the F-22s." He stressed the significance of the F-22's presence in Okinawa.

Local community in Kadena objects

With the intense noise produced by the temporary deployment of F-22s at the Kadena base, the local residents are demanding the withdrawal of the aircraft. Rice's statement is interpreted as an indication of

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a possible permanent stationing of F-22s, and this has aroused local objections.

Rice also stated at the news conference: "No other country in the world (except for the U.S.) has F-22s. The deployment of this aircraft in Japan is made possible through the U.S.-Japan alliance. Japan enjoys benefits that many other countries in the world do not."

Regarding the position of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the House of Representatives election of working for the relocation of the USFJ's Futenma Air Station outside of Okinawa, Rice said: "(The USFJ realignment agreement) is strong as a package. Changing the individual elements may result in the weakening of the whole package. It is the consistent position of the Japanese and U.S. governments that individual components will not be changed." He indicated that the existing plan to relocate Futenma to waters off Henoko in Nago City is the best option, checking the DPJ's proposal on relocation out of Okinawa.

As to the question of reviewing the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, Rice said that this should be dealt with through the improvement of operations.

(2) Gist of Q&A session at USFJ Commander Lt. Gen. Rice's news conference

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 2) (Full)  
July 29, 2009

Following is a gisting of the question-and-answer session at the news conference of Lt. Gen. Edward Rice, commander of U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ):

Q: There are demands in Japan for the review of the USFJ realignment agreement and the relocation of the Futenma Air Station out of Okinawa or out of Japan.

Rice: Since this is a complex agreement (a package), there are certain points that people disagree with. There are many beneficial elements in this agreement. Our consistent position is that the individual components will not be changed.

Q: There are demands for the revision of the Status of Forces

Agreement (SOFA) and a review of the (so-called) sympathy budget (host nation support).

Rice: There is no need to review the SOFA. We will think about how to implement (improvement of operations) at an appropriate time. Japan cannot defend the United States due to constitutional constraints. One way it can contribute to the alliance relationship is through host nation support.

Q: In relation to the U.S. "nuclear umbrella," there are people who talk about considering Japan's possession of its own nuclear capability.

Rice: U.S. deterrence, including the nuclear umbrella, is working powerfully. There is no reason Japan should have its own nuclear capability.

Q: Does the deployment of the F-22s contribute to regional

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stability?

Rice: Yes, it does. It also provides a very important training opportunity for the Self-Defense Forces. The deployment of F-22s in Okinawa is a symbol of the many benefits of the Japan-U.S. alliance.

(3) USFJ commander's remark on benefits of F-22 deployment: "Nuisance for local residents"; local community wary of permanent deployment

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 25) (Full)  
July 29, 2009

Central Okinawa - In reaction to U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) commander Lt. Gen. Edward Rice's remark on July 28 that the temporary deployment of F-22 fighters on Kadena Air Base "is made possible by the Japan-U.S. alliance, and this is a benefit many countries in the world do not enjoy," local communities near the base have begun to express concern about the permanent deployment of the aircraft and the reinforcement of Kadena's functions.

Chatan Mayor Masaharu Noguni, chair of the liaison group of three municipalities on Kadena Air Base, said: "From the U.S. forces' standpoint, they may think that they are contributing to the Japan-U.S. security arrangements, but from the local residents' standpoint, they alone are enduring the nuisance. They are concerned that (the remark) may mean the permanent deployment of the aircraft."

Mayor Mitsuko Tomon of Okinawa City gave these comments: "Our position against the permanent deployment of F-22s remains unchanged. The deployment of the F-22s on Kadena will lead to the reinforcement of its functions. The USFJ realignment process is supposed to reduce the burden on Okinawa, but the excessive burden has remained unchanged. Okinawa City demands a stop to measures that will reinforce base functions."

Toshiyuki Kinjo, vice chairman of the Kadena Municipal Assembly's special committee on base issues, stated: "(The U.S.) may make F-22 deployment permanent on the ground that F-22s will not be sold to Japan. The temporary deployment of F-22s is also an indication of the importance attached by the Japanese and U.S. governments to the Kadena base. It is doubtful whether the burden on Okinawa will become lighter through the USFJ realignment process."

(4) Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura criticizes DPJ policy of withdrawing refueling mission in Indian Ocean

SANKEI ONLINE (Full)  
12:20, July 29, 2009

At his news conference on the morning of July 29, Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura commented on the policy of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) to terminate and withdraw the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean when the

new special antiterrorism measures law expires in January 2010 if it takes over the reins of government. He said: "The continuation of this policy is an international request," questioning the DPJ's policy. He added: "It seems that the DPJ has not reached an internal consensus on this. It is necessary for the party to come up with a concrete policy."

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(5) LDP manifesto plays up fiscal and security policies to make clear distinction from DPJ

YOMIURI (Page 3) (Abridged slightly)  
July 29, 2009

Shinichi Kimura, Political Department

A draft of the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) manifesto (campaign pledges) for the forthcoming House of Representatives became clear yesterday. The draft manifesto depicts the LDP as a "party of responsibility." The manifesto is also tinged with a sense of alarm and rivalry against the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which is gaining momentum due to its victories in a series of local elections and rising support ratings. It also offers a glimpse of the pride of the Aso cabinet, which has taken many economic stimulus measures since its inauguration last September. Possibly with an eye on the DPJ manifesto which was unveiled on July 27, the LDP manifesto also includes some policies that are similar to those in the DPJ's.

Prime Minister Taro Aso, who is also the president of the LDP, gave a short speech on the LDP manifesto yesterday in which he said: "We have a responsibility to turn Japan into a country that can fully demonstrate its power and that is appealing to everyone."

In debates in the run-up to the Lower House election, the LDP is set to hit the ambiguity of the funding sources and foreign and security policies specified in the DPJ manifesto. It will intentionally refer to highly controversial topics, such as a consumption tax hike and amending the Constitution. The LDP manifesto is designed to do just that.

Prime Minister Aso held talks with LDP Election Strategy Council Vice-Chairman Yoshihide Suga at a Tokyo restaurant on the night of July 27 in which Aso said: "The DPJ plans to lavishly spend money but has no specific plans when it comes to where that money should come from. The LDP has an economic growth strategy that will generate revenues that can be distributed. That is the difference." Aso and Suga shared the view that the DPJ manifesto lacks an economic growth strategy and means to restore fiscal health.

The draft LDP manifesto underlines the Aso cabinet's efforts, saying that it has implemented four sets of economic stimulus measures in quick succession. The manifesto pledges to: (1) achieve 2 percent economic growth in the latter half of 2010; (2) return the economic growth and unemployment rates to 2007 levels by 2011; and (3) put the Japanese economy on stable growth track in 2012 and beyond. The manifesto also spells out the LDP's determination to proactively implement economic stimulus measures for the next two years.

To restore soundness in the nation's finances, the LDP manifesto is also designed to achieve a surplus in the primary balance of the central and local governments in ten years' time. With respect to a consumption tax hike, the manifesto specifies a plan to "make preparations to review the rate after the nation's economy turned around" in line with the mid-term tax reform program specifying to take legislative steps to allow the government to drastically reform the tax system, including the consumption tax rate, starting in fiscal 2011. This, too, is intended to clarify the difference with the DPJ.

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On the foreign and security fronts, a plan is highlighted to aim at

a permanent law governing the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). An LDP lawmaker criticized the DPJ, saying, "We cannot leave Japan to a party that hesitates to deal with a commonsense matter and cannot produce a unified view."

Encompassing former Japan Socialist Party ranks who are cautious about the overseas dispatch of the SDF, the DPJ manifesto makes no mention of the SDF. Further, in an attempt to elucidate the difference with the DPJ manifesto which simply says "if there is any shortfall in the Constitution, it will be covered," the LDP manifesto includes a review of the government's constitutional interpretation that prohibits exercising the right to collective self-defense and an early amendment to the Constitution.

Many LDP policies vie with DPJ policies, at the same time.

In the LDP, which has many hereditary lawmakers, there were strong objections to prohibiting fielding hereditary candidates, a key element in political reform. The DPJ has already decided to prohibit relatives within the third degree of kinship, such as children and spouses of lawmakers, from running in the same electoral district in succession. For this reason, the LDP has decided to restrict hereditary candidacies, in the same way as the DPJ, starting in the election after the next.

As for the number of Diet seats, the DPJ has announced to reduce the number of Lower House representation seats (now set at 180) by 80. Out of rivalry, the LDP advocates reducing the number of Lower House seats (480) by over 10 percent starting in the election after the next and the total number of lower and upper house seats (722) by more than 30 percent in ten years' time.

Both the LDP and DPJ have come up with child support measures one after another.

The DPJ has announced the creation of a monthly child allowance of 26,000 yen, while the LDP plans to introduce free education for preschool children aged between 3 and 5 over the next four years. The DPJ manifesto also includes provision of subsidies equivalent to tuition fees to households with public high school students. In contrast, the LDP platform advocates the creation of a free high school and college education system and a grant-type scholarship system strictly for low-income households.

LDP Senior Deputy Secretary-General Nobuteru Ishihara delivered a street speech in Tokyo yesterday in which he said: "We will make up for anything that is regarded as lacking by the people. We will assist in areas that need more help."

Nevertheless, it is unclear whether the LDP manifesto will eventually specify the costs required for implementing its policies and where the money comes from. The government estimates that free preschool education costs 790 billion yen and free high school education for low-income households - 22.9 billion yen (subsidies equivalent to 100 percent of tuition fees for households making less than 2.5 million yen annually and 50 percent of tuition fees for households with less than 3.5 million yen).

The repetition of measures helping households is certain to be criticized as a doling-out policy. How to wipe away such criticism

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will be a challenge.

The LDP announced yesterday that Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone; Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi; and Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Yoichi Masuzoe - all Upper House members - were appointed effective yesterday as special assistants to the secretary general and the Policy Research Council chairman. They will play the role of explaining the contents of the LDP manifesto and party policies for the upcoming Lower House election.

(6) LDP concentrating on strategy of criticizing DPJ

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
July 29, 2009

The usual pattern in past general elections was that the ruling side was in the lead while the opposition camp assumed the offensive. For the upcoming House of Representatives election, however, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is on the defensive while the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is on the offensive. The LDP has also adopted an election strategy of criticizing the other side's policies louder than asserting its own policies, acting as if it were an opposition party. The LDP gives us the impression that it has recognized the DPJ as if it were actually the ruling party.

Cabinet members and senior LDP officials yesterday criticized as unrealistic the campaign pledges the DPJ unveiled on July 27 in the lead-up to the next general election. Finance Minister Kaoru Yosano said: "(The DPJ's policy manifesto) is something like fly fishing for an election." State Minister of Consumer Affairs Seiko Noda commented: "There must be other motives behind the sweet words."

The LDP is fighting an uphill battle due to Prime Minister Taro Aso's unpopularity and a strong view that the LDP's ability has reached its limits. Aso can no longer be the "face" of the LDP for the election, so he has to refrain from delivering stumping speeches. The process of preparing its policy manifesto has also been delayed. Under such circumstances, the LDP probably has no choice but to thoroughly attack the DPJ.

In attacking the DPJ, the LDP has focused on the DPJ's ability to hold the reins of government, as well as the measures inserted in its manifesto and the fiscal resources for these measures. The ruling party's aim is make the voters feel uneasy of the DPJ taking over the reins of government.

Now that a change of government is taking on a touch of becoming a real possibility, the LDP has also begun to criticize the DPJ's stance as pushing its luck. DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama said in a speech on July 26: "I will retire from politics after serving as prime minister." Hearing this, a senior LDP member cynically said: "The Hatoyama remark insults the people. He talks as if his party already grabbed the reins of government.

#### (7) Editorial: DPJ foreign, security policies too ambiguous

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
July 29, 2009

There is such a thing as "strategic ambiguity" in diplomatic jargon. For example, a country can choose not to reveal whether it has weapons of mass destruction or not and use this as deterrence

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against other countries.

In this sense, the foreign and security policies of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in its manifesto (campaign pledges) and Policy Index 2009 are full of "strategic ambiguity." This is probably a tactic it is using to achieve the immediate goal of winning the House of Representatives election.

If it casts away its ambiguity and clearly spells out its standing policies, its ability to govern will be questioned and it will not be able to win over new supporters. If it comes up with new policies in order to take power, it will lose its old followers, and this will not be good for the election. Therefore, it has chosen to remain ambiguous, which will also help prevent internal strife in the party from surfacing.

Perhaps for this reason, a small section on foreign policies is only found in the right hand corner of the double-spread page on "employment and the economy" after pages upon pages of the manifesto. Everything about these policies is in abstract terms, such as "contribute to the world with an independent foreign policy."

A typical example of an ambiguous policy is the passage "the exercise of the right of self-defense is limited exclusively to self-defense" on page 16. Following is a quote from the relevant

section:

"With regard to the right of self-defense, without being bound by the hitherto theoretical debate on the right of individual or collective self-defense, this right will only be exercised in accordance with Article 9 of the Constitution when there is a direct threat to Japan's peace and security and when Japan is subject to an imminent and unlawful invasion. Force will not be used under all other circumstances."

The passage on "without being bound" seems to suggest that the DPJ is flexible on the exercise of the right of collective self-defense. However, the next sentences make it clear that it will allow only the right of individual self-defense. Preceding the passage with "without being bound by the hitherto theoretical debate on the right of individual or collective self-defense" is a conscious strategy to remain ambiguous.

The DPJ's non-inclusion of its opposition to the refueling mission of the Maritime Self-Defense Force in the manifesto is regarded as an indication of the party's pragmatism. However, (then) President Ichiro Ozawa once said that the refueling mission is inseparable from the use of force and is, therefore, unconstitutional. The above quote suggests that Ozawa's view is still influential.

If the DPJ thinks that ambiguity in foreign policy will enable it to respond flexibly after taking over the administration, then it is taking a pragmatic line merely as an election campaign tactic. If that is the case, the foreign and security policies in its manifesto and policy index are just empty words.

We hope that this ambiguity can be eliminated through debate and the voters will be presented with an appropriate basis to make their judgment. The DPJ should present its pragmatic foreign policies openly and compete with the Liberal Democratic Party. There is still time to do so.

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(8) Interview with JCP Chairman Shii on 2009 Lower House election

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
July 29, 2009

-- What is the meaning of the upcoming House of Representatives election?

Shii: The election will offer the public the chance to judge and choose the party that they feel should stand at the political helm. I want voters to make a decision to put an end to the government run by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the New Komeito. The poll also will give the public an opportunity to rebuild Japanese politics after the LDP-New Komeito coalition administration is replaced. I would like voters to consider the future course of Japan in the 21st century.

-- There is a possibility that the JCP will be pushed into the background of the two major parties, on which all eyes are now being focused.

Shii: Although it is often said that party voters will choose between the LDP and DPJ, I don't think the public are not troubled by this choice. An overwhelming majority of the public wants the LDP-New Komeito coalition government to leave. Tremendous efforts are required for surfacing, but we are now gradually sensing a good response from the public that we will be able to survive if we keep going. If we explain to the public how we will rebuild Japan, the worth of the JCP will increase.

-- In the campaigning, priority will be given to the proportional representation race. What is the JCP's goal?

Shii: Our goal is to win more than 6.5 million votes in the proportional representation blocs across the nation. With regard to the single-seat constituency system, we will definitely win in the No. 1 district in Kyoto. In the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly

election, each voter had only one ballot, but voters have two ballots (one for the district poll and the other for the proportional representation race) in the general election. Emphasizing this, we will call the public to write the name of the JCP in the proportional representation segment. Voters may be worried about the DPJ. There is a strong chance for the JCP to grow strong if we can play up our party.

-- The JCP stresses in its manifesto a pledge to protect the daily lives of the people.

Shii: During the ten years of the LDP-New Komeito government, both the people were deprived of security and hopes for their livelihoods. According to a nationwide survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, culture, Sports, and Science and Technology, only 11 percent of respondents said they would be able to live in comfort, while 57 percent responded that they would be badly off. If we have hopes, we will be able to endure even in a bad situation. But we have neither peace of mind nor hopes. The structural reform policy line that allowed business circles and leading companies to take arbitrary actions has collapsed. A drastic change in politics is needed to protect the daily lives of the people.

-- What is the reason for your party revealing its response to a DPJ  
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administration after the election?

Shii: The direct reason is the result of the Tokyo assembly election. Chances are strong that a DPJ-led administration will be launched. It will be best if the JCP is able to join it immediately. But we are not at that stage. We are not forced to make such a decision because the DPJ has gained strength. We will take a position as a responsible party.

-- Do you mean that the JCP will decide whether to support the DPJ on an issue-by-issue basis as a constructive opposition party?

Shii: The JCP (and the DPJ) coincide in views on many issues, including abolishing the health insurance system for people aged 75 and older and the Services and Supports for Persons with Disabilities Law, and implementing free high-school education. However there are also a lot of issues on which they cannot find common ground. The JCP will firmly oppose a consumption tax hike. The party will disagree to amending Article 9 of the Constitution. We will object to a decrease in the number of Lower House proportional representation seats.

-- What your party's response to the election to choose a prime minister after the general election?

Shii: The JCP will take independent action in the first poll. Should a play-off be conducted, there is a possibility that our party members will vote for the DPJ candidate in order to prevent the LDP-New Komeito government from keeping in existence. But we will not do so unconditionally. Negotiations will be necessary.

-- What are your preconditions?

Shii: It is too early to reveal specific conditions at present. They will be revealed gradually through our election campaign.

(9) Interview with Gerald Curtis, professor at Columbia University:  
Two-party system likely to take root in Japan

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)  
July 28, 2009

Many Japanese now expect that the upcoming House of Representatives election will bring about a change of government. Even if people do not have great expectations of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), they are hoping for a switch to a new government because of their dislike for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Such a trend is common in other democracies, but for Japan, it is now being seen for the first time in the postwar period -- a major political change.

Changes in the Japanese society have finally begun to decisively affect politics. The support bases of the LDP are noticeably starting to crumble. In New York, where I lived as a teenager, the Democratic Party operated a powerful electoral machine because of the strong sense of community among immigrants. But society soon diversified and the community collapsed, destroying the machine as a result. The process in New York at that time and the current state in Japan are very similar.

Although there is a high probability that the DPJ will assume the reins of government, it is uncertain whether the DPJ will continue

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to enjoy the advantage until the end of the long election campaign. The LDP has started an offensive against the DPJ's policies. Unless the DPJ can respond to the criticism with proper explanations, the situation could change again.

I am not worried about U.S.-Japan relations under a DPJ government. Since the DPJ has begun to turn pragmatic, I do not think bilateral ties will significantly change. If both sides make proposals or advice to each other on global warming and other nonmilitary issues, I think the two countries will become closer.

I welcome the DPJ's proposal for reviewing the current relationship between politicians and bureaucrats. In the Taisho Democracy Era, the president of the leading party in the Lower House began to assume the premiership, but senior government officials at that time were appointed directly by the Emperor. The government has worked together with bureaucrats since the Taisho Era (1912-1926). This dual system tends to make vague the question of where responsibility lies with.

The key point is how to use bureaucrats effectively. The wording "emerging from the influence of bureaucrats" should not be used. If the DPJ succeeds in making use of bureaucrats effectively and in uniting the ruling parties and the government, the party will be able to carry out the most drastic reform since the Taisho Era.

Deputy President Ichiro Ozawa's position and action will also affect the situation. I expect his long-cherished desire for a change of government to be fulfilled and Mr. Ozawa to become a good advisor for the DPJ. But if Mr. Ozawa gives an impression that he is forming something like an Ozawa faction, centering on fresh lawmakers, and exerts his influence without engaging in any official duty, his presence will be similar to that of Mr. Kakuei Tanaka after he resigned as prime minister.

I think that a two-party system will take root in Japan in the future. Once the DPJ assumes political power, an election will not be held for another three to four years. There will be enough time for the LDP to rebuild its organization. If the LDP seriously considers in what direction Japan should move ahead and if it produces a new vision and carries out necessary reform measures based on it, its comeback will be fully possible.

If a two-party system is introduced in a society like Japan that is relatively free from internal divisions, it will be difficult to find major policy differences between the two parties. If the difference between the LDP and the DPJ is small, like the difference between Toyota and Nissan, the voters tend to focus on each party leader's personal appeal in making a decision. If a rabble-rouser who exudes charisma comes on the stage, there is danger that the brake will not be applied.

(10) Issues to be questioned in 2009 Lower House election: Karel van Wolferen urges new government to change relations with bureaucracy

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
July 28, 2009

The official election campaign for the July 30 House of Representatives election will kick off on Aug. 18. In the Lower House election, the possibility of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) taking over the reins of government is now moving closer to

reality. Amid such a situation, the Mainichi Shimbun interviewed Karel van Wolferen, writer and professor emeritus at the University of Amsterdam, as to what meaning the upcoming election will have for Japanese history and society.

The phrase that "it can't be helped" has been a key word for the Japanese politics. It was believed that it would be impossible to change the political situation. In 1993 when the coalition administration, excluding the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was inaugurated, people started anticipating, "A change is possible." But expectations were disappointed soon. The reason was that a substantial change did not occur because politicians who took over the reins of government from the LDP did not work under the existing political system.

A two-party system will probably be established in Japan for the first time in the postwar period through the upcoming general election. The people will decide their fate through the poll, seeing it as an opportunity to rebuild Japan. The differences from the situation in 1993 (when the LDP fell from power) are that the public is looking forward to a drastic change and that a viable opposition party (DPJ), which aims to take over political helm and is reliable, exists. There is probably a skeptical view that the there will be little change in the governments led by the LDP and DPJ. Yet, there were little change between the Friends of Constitutional Government and the Constitutional Democratic Party, political parties in prewar Japan. With a change in government, however, Japan was able to have an opportunity to rebuild itself by having fresh politicians take part in the non-LDP government.

Over the last decade, Japan's internal politics and international status have been adrift. Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi appeared to be a reformer, but such was an illusion. He became a "tool" for Finance Ministry officials. With his political method, the LDP failed. However, the LDP-led administration has existed, because there was no other choice.

If the DPJ assumes the political helm, the prime minister will have more power and there will be a change in relations between politicians and bureaucrats. However, should (the prime minister) be arrogant, he will not be able to run the administration. Many bureaucrats think that political drift is not good for Japan. The new government will have to find ways to work together with them.

The cabinet meeting held twice a week lasted for only 20 minutes after cabinet ministers agreed to what was decided the previous day by administrative vice ministers. It is difficult for the prime minister have bureaucrats immediately follow his blueprint for carrying out a national vision.

Japan's fundamental problem is the nation lacks a political center, which we can see in its policy toward the United States. Japan's relationship with the United States is unsound. Japan has not been able to take independent action in the international community.

DPJ President Yukio Hatoyama will probably take an independent position rather than follow the LDP's line. It would be better for Japan to keep American at arm's length for the sake of its future and peace in Asia. However, since Japan's financial and industrial markets are closely connected to the United States, even under a DPJ-led government, there will be little change in the Japan-U.S. relations.

Many Japanese people are becoming increasingly unhappy with the country's political situation. Unless politics show the nation's future course, it will be unable to get the public on its side. In the 1960s, Japanese people did not make much money but worked long hours, with the national goal of becoming an advanced industrial country. However, Japan has no such a national goal.

There are probably expectations in Japan that a new government and new prime minister will come into being. However, excessive expectations are prone to make groundless optimism sprout wings. Although the upcoming general election will be the first step to improve Japan's situation, a long and rocky path lies ahead for Japan.

(11) Commentary: Good opportunity to change diplomatic concepts

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
July 29, 2009

Comments by Kiichi Fujiwara, professor at University of Tokyo Graduate School, as summarized by interviewer Yukiko Yamazaki

The forthcoming House of Representatives election is a rare election in Japan which may possibly lead to a change of administration. But actually, a change of administration should be the norm for all elections.

Historically, there have been powerful single parties in parliamentary democracies, such as the Christian Democratic Party of Italy or the Institutional Revolutionary Party of Mexico, but they eventually disintegrated and lost control of power. This has not happened in Japan, where an internationally peculiar prolonged one-party rule has been in place.

Even if a Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration takes over after the election, it will have to give emphasis to continuity in foreign policy. Consistency in foreign policy gives the impression of a responsible political party.

Nevertheless, a change of administration will be a good opportunity to change the assumptions in Japan's diplomacy. For example, Japan admitted squarely to its responsibility for aggression on Asian countries during the non-LDP Hosokawa coalition government. This came even before Japan's official apology through the "Murayama Statement" of 1995 and was rated highly at home and abroad.

I believe there are few people in the DPJ right now who want to work on history issues. However, taking the initiative and not acting after China or the Republic of Korea complains enhances credibility and will contribute to actualizing the policy of giving emphasis to Asia.

Taking the nuclear issue as an example, after the Obama administration came out with its policy of stressing the goal of nuclear non-proliferation, it is now easier in Japan to talk about non-reliance on nuclear arms in Asian security. This is an opportunity to move on to concrete policies, rather than just making appeals based on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as symbols.

What is important in the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear issue is Japan's ability to have its say in negotiations centered on

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the nuclear powers, the U.S., Russia, and China. The Japanese government is resigned to the fact that nonnuclear powers cannot negotiate on the nuclear issue, but that is a mistake. Japan should take the lead in nuclear arms reduction.

A nuclear disarmament process led by the nuclear powers will have its limitations because it is not possible to ask the other party to disarm when one is unwilling to do so. It is necessary for the nonnuclear powers to have a stronger voice in disarmament talks to spur reciprocal reductions. Other nations will probably be unable to complain that Japan is "just talking in cliches" since it is an atomic-bombed country.

Japan's ability to send out messages through its foreign policy has been weak since World War II. Postwar foreign policy has also been extremely narrow in scope, consisting only of Japan-U.S. relations and East Asia. Japan also has the responsibility of creating the international order as a major power. It cannot afford to say: "Middle East? It's none of my business."

(12) Government eyes yen loans to secure rare metal supply

NIKKEI (Top Play) (Slightly abridged)  
July 29, 2009

The government will start to build infrastructure in developing countries near deposits of rare metals. It plans to back up Japanese firms' participation in such projects by offering yen loans for roads, railways and other infrastructure. The government eyes projects in Africa, South America, and Asia, where there are still a number of undeveloped mines. Rare metals are indispensable for making cellular phones, next-generation automobiles, and other products. Given this, securing the stable supply of rare metals is essential for Japanese industries. The government hopes to secure mining rights by deepening ties with resource-producing countries.

China and other emerging countries are stepping up efforts to acquire mining rights in exchange for their providing huge amounts of financial aid to Africa and other regions. The government has also judged it necessary to make active use of its assistance program in order to ensure the stable supply of resources.

The government-affiliated Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corp. (JOGMEC) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry will screen infrastructure projects in which Japanese firms are to participate. The government will set aside several tens of millions of yen as the feasibility study cost for each project. The government expects to offer loans mainly for projects to construct railways, roads and power plants.

The government will offer loans to projects that are deemed profitable and safe in feasible studies. The loan amount for each project is expected to be in the tens of billions of yen given their large scale. Loan amounts and other details are expected to be determined next fiscal year, at the earliest. According to projects, additional support will be provided from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Nippon Export and Investment Insurance (NEXI).

Nearly 10 projects are slated for screening this fiscal year. They include laying railway near a manganese mine in Burkina Faso in southern Africa, in which Mitsui & Co. and other firms will

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participate, and linking a bauxite mine with a port in Vietnam, in which Itochu Corp. and other firms will take part.

The government has also selected a project to construct transportation for electricity in Peru and another project to supply electricity needed for mining in Fiji. In developing countries, there are a lot of untapped oil and rare metal because of inadequate infrastructure. Once infrastructure is built, Japanese companies engaged in resource development will find it easier to make inroads. Meanwhile, improvement infrastructure will make it easier for developing countries to export resources. The government anticipates that once it can strengthen relations with developing countries by utilizing its yen-loan program and government-affiliated financial institutions, it will facilitate Japan to obtain mining rights and to improve its energy security.

ZUMWALT